

Serial No.: 09/724,622

Docket No.: KCC-15,287

REMARKS

Applicants' attorney thanks the Examiner for the comments in the telephone interview. Claims 1, 17 and 19 have been amended to recite a nonwoven surgical fabric laminate. As explained on page 2, first paragraph, the term "surgical fabric laminate" refers to a laminate designed for medical applications, including medical drapes, garments, gowns, towels, sterilization wrap and foot covers. The term is not intended to include non-medical applications.

Claims 1, 17 and 19 have also been amended to indicate that a first meltblown layer consists essentially of coarse fibers having a diameter of at least 5.0 microns and a second (adjacent) meltblown layer consists essentially of fine fibers having a diameter less than 5.0 microns. This is consistent with the definitions on pages 5-6 of the specification. Dependent Claims 23-26 have been amended for consistency with independent Claim 19.

The telephone interview focused on a discussion of U.S. Patent 4,714,647 to Shipp, Jr., et al. The Examiner opined that, while the reference does not disclose adjacent meltblown layers having a mean fiber diameter difference of at least 4.0 microns, the filter in Example 1 may render such a structure obvious. Applicants' attorney pointed out that the design details of Example 1 are for a filter, and would not render obvious surgical fabric laminates having a different optimum design. In particular, the claimed surgical fabric laminates have a relatively open layer of coarse meltblown fibers to facilitate breathability, adjacent to a relatively closed layer of fine meltblown fibers which prevent the liquid from passing through the fabric to the user (p. 3, second full paragraph).

The same design considerations do not apply to filters. Thus, while nonwoven fabric laminates are useful in applications other than filters, Shipp, Jr. et al. provides no guidance on how to design a nonwoven surgical fabric laminate. Persons skilled in the art of filtration would have no motivation to seek such guidance. Similarly, persons skilled in the art of surgical fabric laminates would not seek guidance from prior art teachings directed to filters.

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Applicants believe that the claims are in patentable form, and respectfully request issuance of a Notice Of Allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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